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Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children

Summary

This initial report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children is submitted to the General Assembly in accordance with its resolution 64/146.

On 1 September 2009, Marta Santos Pais assumed her position. In the present report, she recalls the history leading up to the establishment of her position and the scope of her mandate, as defined by the General Assembly in resolution 62/141. She outlines her vision and the priority areas for her work and the strategies she intends to use to achieve progress in implementing the mandate entrusted to her, which builds upon the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children (see A/61/299).

The present report highlights the need to accelerate progress in strategic areas and the special emphasis the Special Representative will place on three overarching recommendations of the study, namely, the development in each State of a comprehensive strategy on violence against children; the introduction of an explicit national legal ban on all forms of violence, in all settings; and the consolidation of data and research in this field.

The report reviews key developments and initiatives promoted by the Special Representative to advance progress in the follow-up to the study at the global, regional and national levels; to promote a consultative process and strengthen strategic partnerships with key stakeholders, including Governments, United Nations partners, human rights bodies and mechanisms, civil society organizations and children and young people; and to secure firm support for her mandate.

* A/65/150.

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I. Background

1. In 2001, following a recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the General Assembly in its resolution 56/138, requested the Secretary-General to conduct an in-depth study on the question of violence against children. In 2003, the Secretary-General appointed Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro as independent expert to lead the study.

2. The United Nations study on violence against children (see A/61/299), submitted at the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, addressed violence in five settings: the family, schools, alternative care institutions and detention facilities, places where children work and the community. The study recognizes that violence against children affects every country, remaining widespread, largely hidden and often condoned by society; violence has long-term consequences on children's life and development, carrying with it serious social costs.

3. The study presents a set of recommendations which provide a decisive reference for accelerating and monitoring progress in violence prevention and response. To promote dissemination and ensure effective follow-up to the study's recommendations, the study recommended the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children.

4. The General Assembly took note of the recommendations of the study and requested the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative on violence against children to act as a high-profile and independent global advocate to promote the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children (resolution 62/141).

II. Appointment of the Special Representative on violence against children

5. On 1 May 2009, the Secretary-General announced the appointment of Marta Santos Pais of Portugal as his Special Representative on violence against children, at the level of Assistant Secretary-General. Ms. Santos Pais assumed her position on 1 September 2009.

6. According to the terms of reference approved in compliance with General Assembly resolution 62/141, the Special Representative reports directly to the Secretary-General, chairs the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children and collaborates closely with a wide range of partners, within and beyond the United Nations system. In accordance with Assembly resolution 64/146, the Special Representative reports annually to the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council.[1]

7. In conformity with General Assembly resolution 62/141, the position of the Special Representative and her Office are funded from voluntary contributions. The mandate was established for a period of three years, after which time it should be evaluated, including with regard to its funding. The Office of the Special Representative is located in New York and provided with administrative support by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The Fund has established a trust

[1] For the report to the Council at its thirteenth session, see A/HRC/13/46.

account in order to receive, hold, administer and disburse financial contributions provided to fund the operation of the Office of the Special Representative, including payment for personnel costs.

III. Mandate of the Special Representative on violence against children

8. As a global independent advocate in favour of the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children, the Special Representative acts as a bridge-builder and a catalyst of actions in all regions, and across sectors and settings where violence against children may occur; she mobilizes action and political support to maintain momentum around this agenda and to achieve steady progress the world over.

9. The mandate of the Special Representative is framed by the United Nations study on violence against children and its strategic recommendations; it builds upon public health and child protection initiatives and developments, and envisages the protection of children from violence as a human rights imperative. Indeed, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights instruments provide a firm normative foundation for the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children. These international standards constitute a sound reference for mainstreaming the protection of children from violence in the national policy agenda, helping to avoid fragmented, diluted or simply reactive solutions and influencing lasting change through their steady implementation. For this reason, the Special Representative promotes the universal ratification and effective implementation of core human rights treaties.

10. The Special Representative makes use of mutually supportive strategies, including the promotion of advocacy for concerns related to violence against children; the contribution to strategic meetings at the international, regional and national levels, including for the identification of good practices, and the promotion of cross-fertilization of experiences across regions, sectors and settings; the organization of field missions; and the promotion of thematic studies and reports.

IV. Priority focus for the mandate: a strategic agenda, solid partnerships and firm support

11. The protection of children from violence calls for urgent action. Violence is a harsh reality for millions of children around the world; it remains largely invisible and socially accepted, and it has serious, lifelong emotional and health impacts on children's lives; it undermines child development and learning abilities, inhibits positive relationships, provokes trauma and depression and leads to risk-taking and aggressive behaviour.

12. Guided by this sense of urgency and the need to accelerate progress in key strategic areas, the Special Representative will, over the period of three years foreseen for her mandate, place a priority focus on:

(a) Promoting a strategic agenda, building upon the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children;

(b) Strengthening key partnerships to achieve progress in the follow-up to the study;

(c) Securing firm support, including sound funding, to promote progress in children's protection from all forms of violence.

A. Promoting a strategic agenda

13. The recommendations of the United Nations study provide a navigation chart for accelerating and monitoring progress in violence prevention and responses. In view of their particular urgency, the study identified time-bound targets for three strategic overarching recommendations. Those areas remain critical and require renewed and firm attention. For that reason, in the broad framework of the study's recommendations, the Special Representative gives priority attention to initiatives aimed at:

(a) The development in each State of a national comprehensive strategy to prevent and address all forms of violence against children, mainstreamed in the national planning process, coordinated by a high-level focal point with leading responsibilities in this area, and supported by adequate human and financial resources to support implementation;

(b) The introduction of an explicit national legal ban on all forms of violence against children, in all settings;

(c) The consolidation of a national system of data collection, analysis and dissemination, and a research agenda on violence against children.

1. A national comprehensive strategy to prevent and address violence against children

14. A national strategy helps to shape a vision and mobilize action and resources for violence prevention and response. With strategic time-bound goals, it provides a navigation chart to stimulate and monitor progress, and support a process of lasting change. To be effective, the strategy needs to be mainstreamed in the national policy and development agenda, adequately supported by sound human and financial resources, and evaluated on a regular basis; and it needs to be coordinated by a high-level focal point with leading responsibilities on children's issues and with authority to articulate activities across governmental departments, in association with relevant stakeholders.

15. Violence against children impacts all children's rights and is therefore best addressed through the effective engagement of all levels of public administration and the involvement of all relevant ministries — including health, education and social affairs, gender, justice and home affairs, planning, economy and finance.

16. In many countries significant efforts are being deployed to move in this direction. In some cases, the development of a national strategy on violence has been promoted through a wide participatory process in which governmental departments, civil society organizations, academics and young people have taken part. In a number of other cases, States have set in place national plans of action and high-level coordinating bodies to oversee implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a core component of which is violence against children.

17. Those significant developments are welcome, but much remains to be done to ensure that violence against children gains visibility in public debate, and in the policy agenda as well as in relevant budgetary decisions.

2. An explicit national legal ban on all forms of violence against children

18. Legislation is a key component of any comprehensive national strategy on violence against children. It is an expression of a country's political commitment to work towards violence prevention and the protection of children's dignity and physical integrity. Legislation encourages positive discipline and the education of children through non-violent means; and it provides protection for victims and witnesses, enabling reporting and redress, and supporting assistance, recovery and reintegration.

19. Around the globe, law reform for children's protection from violence is building momentum. When the United Nations study was finalized, only 16 countries had legislation prohibiting violence in all settings, including corporal punishment in the home. Currently, 27 countries have introduced such a comprehensive legal ban; in all regions, legislative reforms are being pursued to achieve full prohibition, and in several countries new legislation is also under review to prohibit violence in specific settings. In some cases, a monitoring system has been developed to support implementation.

20. Even in countries where harmful practices persist behind deeply entrenched traditions, the legislative process has provided opportunities to involve community and religious leaders, parliamentarians, professional associations, academic institutions and grass-roots organizations, and engage communities concerned. Bridging international standards, policy action and local values, and motivating change from within, legislation has been supported as the fruit of true conviction, gaining traction as a genuine deterrent with preventive effect.

21. Although those are promising developments, additional vigorous efforts are needed. First, efforts to introduce a comprehensive legal ban need to be scaled up. Currently, only 107 States have laws prohibiting violence in schools, 151 countries prohibit it as a form of sentencing, and 108 as a disciplinary measure in penal institutions. Globally, only 4 per cent of children are legally protected from all forms of violence in all settings. Many governments have made commitments to adopt legislation to introduce such a comprehensive ban; when such commitments materialize, the total number of prohibiting States worldwide would reach at least 50, covering around 15 per cent of the global child population.

22. Secondly, in countries where a full legal ban has been adopted, further efforts are required to narrow the gap between legislation and practice. Legislation needs to permeate the work of institutions and shape the training and ethical standards of professionals working with and for children; implementation needs to be supported by awareness-raising and social mobilization initiatives, for the public at large and children in particular; and also by the development of easily accessible, child-sensitive, confidential and independent counselling and reporting mechanisms. This is an area where progress is urgent both to provide an effective remedy to child victims and to overcome the challenges presented by the reluctance of professionals working with and for children to address or refer these cases to relevant bodies and institutions.

23. Building upon strong commitments expressed by countries in all regions, and informed by good practices and lessons learned from past experience, this is an area where progress is within reach. To further consolidate this process, in early 2011 the Special Representative will host, with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), an expert consultation on law reform to combat violence against children.

3. Research and a consolidated data system to inform violence prevention and response

24. Widely perceived as a social taboo or a needed form of discipline, violence against children is seldom reported; official statistics remain limited in their ability to capture the true scale and extent of this phenomenon across nations and social groups. As a result, available information is scarce and inconsistent and only reflects the tip of the iceberg.

25. Yet, without good data, national planning is compromised, effective policymaking and resource mobilization are hampered, and targeted interventions are limited in their ability to prevent and combat violence against children.

26. This is an area where urgent action is required. Existing data sets on children provide a basis to build upon, but they need to be integrated beyond sectors and individual disciplines, promoting a holistic consideration of the child. Gaps in child protection areas need to be addressed and monitoring tools and indicators expanded, including to consider boys and girls of all ages and in all settings, and to address those at greatest risk. Moreover, those efforts need to incorporate children's views and perspectives, and capture their experience, and dynamic and evolving free agency. This is crucial to understand the hidden face of violence and effectively address its root causes.

27. Violence in all its forms affects the life of millions of children around the world. But, as we have learned from the many successful initiatives promoted across regions, it is not inevitable; violence can be prevented and effectively addressed. With a strategic national agenda, with strong and effective legislation, and with sound data and evidence to understand risk factors and inform policy decisions, a world without violence can be realized.

B. Consolidating strategic partnerships

28. The development of the United Nations study generated solid and strategic alliances, within and beyond the United Nations system. To advance the implementation of the recommendations of the study, strengthened partnerships are crucial. The Special Representative will therefore promote enhanced collaboration with key partners, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies; human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms; national governments, regional organizations, parliamentarians, national independent institutions on children's rights; and civil society, including children and young people.

29. Relevant institutional collaboration mechanisms have been set in place to support the Special Representative's mandate and consolidate progress through an effective consultative approach — they include the Inter-Agency Working Group on

Violence against Children and the non-governmental organization (NGO) Advisory Council for follow-up to the study (see sect. V below).

C. Securing firm support

30. Long-term support and predictable funding are indispensable for the effective and independent performance of the Special Representative's mandate. The General Assembly has called upon States and institutions concerned, United Nations agencies and entities, regional and civil society organizations, and the private sector to provide necessary support, including financial contributions. Voluntary contributions in support of the mandate and the Office of the Special Representative are channelled through a trust account which has been set up and is administered by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in order to receive, hold, administer and disburse financial contributions provided for the mandate, including payment for personnel costs.

31. As of July 2010, initial contributions had been received. Additional secure funding is, however, required to enable the Special Representative to effectively pursue her role as a global independent advocate for violence prevention and the protection of children from all forms of violence.

V. Cooperation with key partners

A. Cooperation with the United Nations system, in particular with the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and members of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children

32. The Special Representative has given very high priority to the promotion of enhanced synergies with United Nations partners in the area of violence against children.

33. Strong cooperation has been developed with the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. Regular meetings are held to exchange information and discuss areas for a mutually supportive collaboration, including in the promotion of joint initiatives and missions, and the consideration of joint advocacy for the protection of children's rights. In this regard, the joint participation in international conferences of relevance for both mandates has been particularly valuable.

34. The strong human rights normative foundation shared by both mandates, particularly the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, provides strategic opportunities for further enhancing this critical collaboration.

35. Building on this foundation, the two Special Representatives organized a commemorative event to mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Protocols and launch a global campaign aiming at the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols by 2012, the year of the tenth anniversary of their entry into force. The campaign was launched on 25 May 2010 in New York, with the Secretary-General,

and is promoted in close cooperation with UNICEF, OHCHR, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The goal of universal ratification has been widely endorsed by high-level international conferences, including the Third World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents (Rio de Janeiro, 2008), and is supported by international human rights bodies and a wide network of civil society organizations.

36. During this two-year campaign, the Special Representative on violence against children will promote global adherence to the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. This protocol is in force in 137 countries, and more than 80 per cent of those that have not yet ratified it are parties to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, a treaty with legal obligations to fight the sexual exploitation of children. Several of those countries have also formally committed to ratify the Protocol, including in the context of the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council.

37. Achieving progress in this area is vital. Every year, millions of children are trafficked, enslaved through sexual exploitation, arranged marriage, illegal adoption or forced labour. In its most recent global report, ILO recognizes that 115 million children are victims of hazardous work; and the sale and sexual exploitation of children also figure prominently among the worst forms of child labour.

38. The universal ratification of the Protocol will provide a shared normative foundation to guide States' concerted action, to prevent loopholes in child protection systems and to fight impunity within and across borders, leaving no safe havens for perpetrators.

39. In her collaboration with United Nations organizations, the Special Representative on violence against children has built upon existing inter-agency mechanisms, in particular the Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children, of which ILO, OHCHR, UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) are core members. The Inter-Agency Working Group is a critical forum for consultation, promotion of policy formulation and mainstreaming of concerns related to violence against children within the United Nations system's agenda.

40. The Special Representative has maintained very close cooperation with the core members of the Inter-Agency Working Group, having held very fruitful bilateral discussions and working-level meetings in Geneva. The Special Representative welcomes the critical advice received and the support provided, which have been of decisive relevance for the shaping of her mandate and the missions she has conducted.

41. UNICEF provides administrative support to the Office of the Special Representative and has established a trust fund for the financial contributions provided in support of her mandate. Protection of children from violence is a key dimension of the mandate of UNICEF, and the Special Representative has been associated with important initiatives promoted by that organization.

42. In the framework of its 2008 Child Protection Strategy, UNICEF supports the follow-up to the United Nations study by strengthening child protection systems and promoting social change in attitudes towards children. The Special Representative participated in important discussions on the implementation of the UNICEF Strategy

and its focus on the protection of children from violence, at Headquarters and in the Middle East and North Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and Caribbean regions. She also held strategic meetings with the Child Protection Unit in New York, to enhance synergies and promote complementary work in areas falling within her mandate.

43. UNICEF is engaged in a number of initiatives to strengthen the evidence base concerning the nature and scope of violence against children, and consolidate efforts for data collection and analysis, and for the development of research on violence against children, including on harmful practices. The forthcoming 2010 UNICEF report on parental child disciplinary practices in a range of low- and middle-income countries confirms the high prevalence of violent disciplinary methods, but also recognizes that this practice coexists with non-violent discipline; close to 9 in 10 children experience physical punishment and psychological aggression, with higher rates among boys, among children between 5 and 9 years of age and in households where mothers condone corporal punishment and domestic violence; conversely, violent discipline was less prevalent when caregivers were engaged in greater levels of educational and play activities with their children.

44. The Special Representative was associated with the dissemination of this research, which addresses a priority dimension of her mandate and provides a sound basis to raise awareness of this phenomenon, to promote positive non-violent alternatives and to inform policies and actions for violence prevention and responses.

45. Sexual violence against children, and particularly against girls, has been a topic which has received increased attention. Building upon a national study on violence against children undertaken in Swaziland in 2007 and supported by the Clinton Global Initiative, UNICEF has joined WHO, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Development Fund for Women, together with the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in a strategic partnership to promote similar research in other countries and provide support for the strengthening of an environment to protect girls against sexual violence.

46. This is a significant initiative that the Special Representative will continue to follow closely and which is expected to lead to important results.

47. OHCHR plays a decisive role in the process of implementation of the United Nations study's recommendations and has established, since 2007, a focal point on violence against children. Since the appointment of the Special Representative, the Office's advice and substantive support have remained crucial, helping to consolidate the human rights foundation of her mandate, while promoting the mainstreaming of children's protection from violence across the organization.

48. OHCHR supported the organization in Geneva of the Special Representative's meetings with members of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children, with human rights treaty bodies, in particular the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and with special procedures of the Human Rights Council.[2] The Office also assisted in the organization of meetings with members of the NGO Advisory Council, the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other civil society partners.

[2] For further information, see A/HRC/12/47.

49. At the invitation of OHCHR, the Special Representative participated in December 2009 in the Human Rights Council's Open-ended Working Group to explore the possibility of elaborating an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to provide a communications procedure. In her submission, the Special Representative recalled that the United Nations study had recommended the establishment of effective and independent complaints, investigation and enforcement mechanisms to deal with incidents of violence against children, and highlighted the relevance of a communications procedure for children's protection from violence. She recommended the development of a legal instrument that was duly framed by children's rights, provided for an effective and child-sensitive remedy, and established legal safeguards to protect child victims and prevent any risk of manipulation or reprisals.

50. The valuable role played by safe and accessible counselling, and by complaint and reporting mechanisms for children's protection from violence was given focused attention by the Human Rights Council in its panel discussion on the protection of children from sexual violence, in which the Special Representative on violence against children also participated in March 2010. The Council adopted a resolution[3] in which it strongly condemned all forms of sexual violence and abuse against children; and urged States to develop and establish child-sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms that are confidential and safe. The Council also invited the Special Representative and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography to submit a joint report on this topic to the Council at its sixteenth session.

51. To inform the development of the report, the Special Representative will organize with OHCHR an expert consultation on this topic in September 2010. The meeting aims to provide a comprehensive overview of existing models of accessible and child-friendly counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms, established at governmental level, and by independent institutions and civil society organizations; to reflect on challenges and good practices in the use of such mechanisms by children and their representatives, including in relation to child participation, accessibility, confidentiality, safeguard of privacy and victims' protection; and to make recommendations for their improvement.

52. The Special Representative's participation, in March 2010, in the meeting of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights provided a valuable occasion to discuss ways of benefiting from the experience and advice of these strategic partners in the development of the Human Rights Council's report.

53. National independent institutions, including those with a distinct mandate on children's rights, act as spokespersons of children's voices and concerns, develop policy advocacy and research, provide critical advice, and in some cases address individual complaints. Being accessed directly by child victims and witnesses, those institutions offer an important remedy when violence occurs; and their action is instrumental to raise awareness about violence against children, to promote gender and child-sensitive approaches, to capture children's experiences and trauma, and to give advice to those in need. Their contribution to the report will be of crucial relevance.

[3] A/HRC/RES/13/20.

54. WHO actively supported the development of the United Nations study and remains a critical partner in the process of follow-up.

55. Violence prevention and the promotion of sound evidence, two priority areas addressed by the study, are high on the WHO agenda, as illustrated by the agency's work in the prevention of sexual violence against girls, in the development of new estimates on the prevalence and health impact of child maltreatment, and in the promotion of national surveys in this area. These dimensions gained centre stage at the Fourth Milestones of a Global Campaign for Violence Prevention Meeting, organized in September 2009 in Geneva, in which the Special Representative participated.

56. With high-level participation and expertise from across regions, the meeting provided an excellent platform to present new evidence on interventions to prevent interpersonal violence and reflect on lessons from a wide range of country-level initiatives.

57. The discussions gave particular attention to the protection of children from violence, including child maltreatment and its underlying causes. They also addressed strategies aimed at developing safe, stable and nurturing relationships between children and their parents and caregivers; promoting life skills for children and adolescents; reducing the availability and harmful use of alcohol, guns and knives; promoting gender equality and overcoming cultural and social norms that support violence; and supporting victim identification, care and support programmes.

58. Advancing work in these areas will remain a key dimension of the Special Representative's cooperation with WHO.

59. The Special Representative developed a fruitful collaboration with ILO, particularly with regard to the protection of children from violence in the workplace and in other labour-related activities. Regular meetings have been held to support the implementation of the study's recommendations, including through advocacy, the consolidation of data and research, the promotion of standard-setting activities, as well as the development of practical tools to support Member States in their efforts.

60. In May 2010, the Special Representative participated in the Global Conference on Child Labour held in The Hague, which marked the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and it adopted a road map for achieving their elimination by 2016. The Conference provided a high-level forum for the Special Representative's advocacy in favour of the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and of the protection of children from violence and abuse. Those dimensions were also given strong attention in the Road map.

61. As highlighted by the Special Representative in her address, violence and child labour are closely interrelated. Violence in the home, in schools and in institutions, is a factor that pushes children into child labour, particularly its worst forms; violence is also a means to coerce children to work, and to keep them in exploitation and servitude. At the same time, violence and child labour can be prevented and effectively addressed, through the development of national action plans, the adoption of sound legislation and the strengthening of data and research. These

actions figure prominently in the Road map, which also constitutes a key instrument in the elimination of violence against children in work-related situations.

62. The Special Representative strongly supports the development of new ILO standards to ensure decent work for domestic workers. They open avenues for improving the protection of children from exploitation in domestic service and from any form of violence associated therewith. Child domestic workers, especially girls, are highly vulnerable to violence. Working in private households, often behind closed doors and away from their own home with little or no protection or social support, they are exposed to excessive working hours, hazardous tasks, social stigma and discrimination, and physical and emotional violence, as well as sexual abuse. The Special Representative remains committed to supporting this important standard-setting process and the adoption of binding provisions for the protection of children and young domestic workers.

B. Cooperation with human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms

63. The development of close collaboration with human rights bodies and mechanisms is an essential component of the Special Representative's agenda. This cooperation is critical in pursuing an integrated approach to children's protection from violence and capitalizing on synergies across mandates, in the overall framework of the implementation of children's rights standards and commitments to children, including those undertaken at the Millennium Summit, the special session of the General Assembly on Children and, more recently, the Third World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. The Call for Action adopted by the Congress highlights the importance of close cooperation between mandate holders, and its agenda provides a valuable framework for mutually supportive actions and accelerated progress in the follow-up to the study's recommendations; those include the development of national plans and the enactment of effective legislation, and the establishment of reporting mechanisms for child victims.

64. In this regard, the Special Representative's cooperation with the Committee on the Rights of the Child gains crucial relevance. The United Nations study was developed at the request of the Committee and was strongly grounded in its work on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Committee has devoted special attention to violence against children in thematic debates, general comments and during the consideration of States Parties' reports. At present, all concluding observations include a specific section on the follow-up to the study's recommendations and on cooperation with the Special Representative.

65. The cooperation with the Committee on the Rights of the Child helps to inform advocacy initiatives, assess progress on the protection of children from all forms of violence and support countries in their efforts. For this reason, the Special Representative met the Committee soon after her appointment and has developed very fruitful collaboration through regular meetings and exchange of information, and through joint participation in strategic events and initiatives, at the global, regional and national levels. This strategic partnership has gained a renewed emphasis with the launch of the joint campaign for the universal ratification of the Protocols to the Convention, and the collaboration in support of the development of the report on child-sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms.

66. Collaboration with special procedures of the Human Rights Council has been equally important. The Special Representative participated in their annual meetings in 2009 and 2010, which were particularly useful for information-sharing, for the identification of good practices and the cross-fertilization of experiences, and for the identification of mutually supportive activities for violence prevention and elimination.

67. The joint statement issued on 2 March 2010 by the Special Representative and other relevant mandate holders in the aftermath of the earthquake in Haiti, voicing concern at the serious risks faced by unaccompanied and separated children to being abducted, enslaved, sold or trafficked, confirms the potential for this close collaboration.

68. As a cross-cutting issue, working to eliminate violence against children opens up avenues for developing partnerships across mandates, including child-related mandates, in particular with the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, with whom collaboration has been steadily strengthened and, as mentioned above (see para. 50), a joint report is being developed on child-sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms. Cooperation is also valuable with violence-related mandates, including violence against women and torture; with economic, social and cultural rights-related mandates to help address the root causes of violence; as well as with mandates on the rights to education, freedom of opinion and expression to enhance violence prevention, consolidate a culture of respect for children's rights and empower children and young people.

C. Cooperation with civil society, including children and young people

69. The United Nations study was developed with strong support from civil society organizations and from children and young people, and they remain active partners in the process of implementation of the study's recommendations.

70. The collaboration with civil society has been critical and also facilitated by the establishment, in 2007, of the NGO Advisory Council. The Council has equal representation from leading international organizations and national and regional NGOs. Its primary aim is to encourage and maintain NGO involvement at national, regional and international levels, in advocacy with governments, United Nations agencies and other stakeholders for full implementation of the study's recommendations.

71. The Special Representative met with the NGO Advisory Council in early October 2009 in New York, and in March 2010 in Geneva. The meetings helped to shed light on strategic areas where progress can be achieved and to identify significant opportunities for cooperation in the follow-up to the study's recommendations at the global, regional and national levels, and across the various settings within which violence against children takes place. These areas and opportunities include the adoption of national plans of action to advance implementation of the study's recommendations, the legal prohibition of all forms of violence against children in all settings, the collection and dissemination of age and gender disaggregated data on violence against children, and the establishment of effective and accessible complaint mechanisms for children. The meetings also

considered ways of enhancing children's participation in the follow-up to the study, benefiting from their insights and experience, and mobilizing and empowering them to take action in their own communities.

72. The Special Representative also met in Geneva with the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Working Group on Children and Violence. Both highlighted the importance of pursuing strong collaboration with human rights bodies and mechanisms, in particular the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Human Rights Council.

73. The Special Representative also promoted the consolidation of partnerships with regional NGO networks and with child-led organizations on violence prevention and responses. This cooperation will continue to be actively pursued to advance the process of implementation of the study's recommendations.

74. Over recent years, the participation of children and young people in the promotion of actions to address violence against children has been significant. Their contribution to the study was essential and their involvement continues to be critical for the steps ahead.

75. The Special Representative has been committed to reach out to children and young people in her meetings and expert discussions at global, regional and national levels. Across regions, children identify violence as a priority concern and inspire a deep sense of urgency; as agents of change, developing child rights clubs and advocacy materials, and engaging in peer education and awareness-raising initiatives, they promote an enhanced understanding of the hidden face of violence and support the development of child-sensitive approaches that enhance the effectiveness of violence prevention and responses.

76. Dialogue and regular consultations with children and young people will remain a core component of the Special Representative's mandate. In this regard, the Special Representative welcomes the adoption by the Committee on the Rights of the Child of its General Comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard, which, as acknowledged by the General Assembly in resolution 64/146, is a valuable reference for the contribution of children and young people to the process of follow-up to the study and for informing them about developments in this area.

VI. Key developments and initiatives promoted

77. Framed by the priority agenda identified above, through global advocacy and meetings held in 20 countries, the Special Representative devoted particular attention to:

(a) Global advocacy initiatives to promote the further dissemination of the United Nations study and the follow-up to its recommendations at the international, regional and national levels;

(b) The consolidation of strategic partnerships, including by strengthening institutional collaboration with international and regional organizations and by contributing to high-level meetings with key actors;

(c) The establishment of her Office and mobilization of support to her mandate.

A. Address to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session and to the Human Rights Council at its thirteenth session

78. In her address to the Third Committee on 14 October 2009, at the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly (see A/C.3/64/SR.13), the Special Representative recalled the human rights foundation and the framework provided for her mandate by the study and its recommendations; and she presented the key priority areas for her work, namely, the development of a national strategy to prevent and respond to violence against children, the adoption of an explicit national legal ban on all forms of violence against children, and the consolidation of research and data systems in this area.

79. These dimensions were further considered at the thirteenth session of the Human Rights Council, during the Special Representative's interactive dialogue with the Council and her participation in the panel discussion on sexual violence against children. Member States provided very positive feedback on her core agenda and expressed commitment to supporting her mandate. This was critical to shaping the work ahead and promoting a fruitful collaboration with governments across regions.

80. These two United Nations meetings provided a strategic forum for the Special Representative to join hands with Member States, United Nations agencies, regional organizations and civil society and child-led organizations in arranging high-level events designed to raise awareness, promote cross-fertilization of experiences and encourage further progress in crucial areas of the Special Representative's agenda — these include the development of national strategies to prevent and address violence in all settings, the enactment of effective legislation, and the promotion of gender-sensitive and child-participatory approaches, as well as the promotion of universal ratification and effective implementation of international children's rights standards.

B. Participation in the twelfth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

81. The Special Representative's participation, in April 2010, in the Congress and in the Latin American Seminar on Juvenile Justice, hosted in parallel by the Government of Brazil, provided a strategic platform to address situations of violence experienced by child victims of crime and children deprived of liberty.

82. As highlighted by those meetings, child victims of violence are still too often criminalized and not protected as children, including as a result of trafficking and sexual exploitation. Marginalized children, including migrant and asylum-seeking children, are often subject to physical, psychological and sexual violence, denied access to legal assistance and placed in detention as a substitute for care arrangements. Thousands of children are subjected to deprivation of liberty, frequently used as a first option rather than a measure of last resort; they risk torture, abuse and humiliating treatment, including when placed in pretrial detention, and endure violence as a form of control, discipline or punishment; in some countries, sentencing can include caning, flogging, stoning or amputation, as well as capital punishment and life imprisonment without possibility of release.

83. The situation of those children remains hidden and surrounded by stigma, and is seldom envisaged as a priority in the policy agenda. There is scarce information on the numbers of children deprived of liberty and on the reasons that lead to their placement in justice and care institutions; independent monitoring mechanisms are rarely available to safeguard their rights and address their complaints; and sensationalistic information, combined with ill perception of growing juvenile delinquency, fuel social pressure for the criminalization of children and adolescents, and for the introduction of increasingly lower ages of criminal responsibility and longer measures of deprivation of liberty. This is a pattern that helps to create a culture of tolerance of violence against children, and which often contributes to the stigmatization of children belonging to poor and disadvantaged groups.

84. In this overall scenario, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other human rights standards run the risk of being relegated to a second tier, and the fight against impunity for acts of violence against children is confronted with renewed challenges.

85. These are critical concerns the Special Representative will continue to address in the context of her mandate and missions.

C. Cooperation with intergovernmental and regional organizations and institutions

86. The widely participatory regional consultations organized in support of the United Nations study and the preparations for the Third World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents were instrumental in generating interest in and commitment to the elimination of violence in its many forms. In some regions, a regional follow-up mechanism was set up to facilitate coordination of efforts and promote progress in this area.

87. Building upon these significant developments, the Special Representative gave priority attention to strengthening institutional collaboration with regional institutions and organizations, aiming at the promotion of information-sharing and cross-fertilization of experiences, the scaling-up of positive initiatives, and the development of evidence-based approaches to overcome challenges and influence progress within and across regions.

88. With that aim, the Special Representative took part in strategic, high-level regional conferences and has pursued the strengthening of partnerships with regional organizations and institutions. This is an area where significant developments have taken place, with a growing institutionalization of regional governance structures and the development of regional strategies to promote and monitor progress in the follow-up to the study's recommendations. This is meaningfully illustrated by the decisive improvements made across regions, including by the South Asian Initiative to End Violence against Children, the League of Arab States Sub-Committee on Violence against Children, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Council of Europe Strategy for 2009-2011: Building a Europe for and with Children, the Pan American Child Congress, the Latin America and Caribbean Chapter of the Global Movement for Children, and by the African Union and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

1. XX Pan American Child Congress

89. In September 2009, the Special Representative participated in the XX Pan American Child Congress, organized by the Organization of American States and the Inter-American Children's Institute, and hosted in Lima by the Government of Peru. With high-level participation from member States, as well as from national independent institutions for children's rights, non-governmental organizations and academics from the Americas, the Congress was held in commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and of the eighth anniversary of the Inter-American Children's Institute. Strong attention was devoted to public policies for the realization of children's rights, including the protection of children from violence. Violence against children was also centre stage in the official sessions and in the formal dialogue between ministers and high authorities, and the Special Representative and the Rapporteur on the Rights of the Child of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Professor Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro.

90. The Congress was a strategic forum to advance progress in the Americas on follow-up to the recommendations of the study, and to launch the "Report on Corporal Punishment and Human Rights of Children and Adolescents", issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.[4] This important report builds upon the United Nations study and calls on States members of the Organization of American States to place explicit and absolute legal bans on the use of corporal punishment in all settings; adopt preventive, educational and other measures to ensure the eradication of this form of violence; and promote positive and non-violent alternatives; and make the Americas a region free of child corporal punishment by 2011.

91. The Pan American Child Congress was preceded by a civil society forum and included, for the first time, a Pan American Forum on Children. The Forum placed high on the agenda of the Congress the questions of child participation and children's protection from violence — indeed, violence against children was identified as their most pressing concern.

92. The deliberations of the Congress informed a significant process of follow-up, which has led to the promotion in several countries of initiatives to introduce a comprehensive legal prohibition of all forms of violence against children; and to the establishment of national consultative councils to institutionalize children's participation in decision-making.

93. The Congress also laid the ground for a solid institutional collaboration with regional forums and institutions in the Americas, including the Inter-American Children's Institute and, in particular, the Rapporteur on the Rights of the Child of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, with whom a strategic framework of cooperation was developed for the protection of children from all forms of violence.

[4] Document OEA/Ser.L/V/II.135.

2. Twelfth Ibero-American Conference of Ministers and Authorities Responsible for Children

94. The Special Representative participated in the Twelfth Ibero-American Ministerial Meeting, held in June 2010 in Buenos Aires, and devoted to the role of education in the promotion of children's social inclusion. Her address placed special attention on the impact of school violence on children's safety and learning achievement, which is often aggravated by surrounding factors, including social unrest, availability of weapons and gang-related criminal activities.

95. Recognizing the importance of violence prevention, she called for steady investment in early childhood education to ensure the development of children's talents and abilities to their full potential, to break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage for young people and to promote their social inclusion. Young children are indeed at particular risk of violence and they are also less able to resist and seek protection; fear and trauma compromise their development and threaten their sense of security and trust. Conversely, loving, secure and stimulating relationships of young children with their families and caregivers build a foundation for their physical, emotional and intellectual development and enhance their confidence and free agency.

96. Recalling the still frequent perception of violence as a needed form of discipline and the insufficient attention given to this phenomenon by laws, policies and school institutions, she placed a special emphasis on the adoption of legislation to firmly ban all violence in schools; the development of awareness-raising and capacity-building initiatives for professionals; the promotion of mediation and conflict resolution through non-violent means; as well as the promotion of participatory processes with the involvement of all stakeholders, including children themselves.

97. The Buenos Aires Declaration, adopted by the Ministerial Meeting, echoed some of those concerns, having specifically recommended the development of effective laws and policies for the protection of children from violence, in line with the recommendations of the United Nations study. Violence against children was equally identified as a priority concern to be included in the agenda of future ministerial meetings.

3. Regional meeting on the role of parliamentarians in preventing and eliminating violence against children

98. The National Assembly of Costa Rica, supported by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UNICEF, in 2009 convened an important regional meeting on the role of parliamentarians in the prevention and elimination of violence against children. The meeting called upon national parliaments to promote the organization of a national debate to monitor and advance follow-up to the study's recommendations, the adoption of law reform to explicitly ban all forms of violence against children, and the allocation of adequate resources in support of child-related public policies.

99. These key dimensions constitute a core agenda that the Special Representative is committed to pursuing across regions and in close collaboration with IPU and UNICEF. They provide a sound reference for her official meetings with national parliaments, as was the case in Peru and Turkey; and they informed her address to

the 122nd IPU Assembly, held in March 2010 in Bangkok, and attended by representatives from over 120 countries.

4. Cooperation with the Latin America and Caribbean Chapter of the Global Movement for Children

100. Decisive steps were taken to consolidate regional collaboration and agree on a strategic action plan on violence against children with the Latin America and Caribbean Chapter of the Global Movement for Children, in which UNICEF and key civil society organizations participate.

101. Following an important planning meeting in December 2009 with members of the Movement, the Rapporteur on the Rights of the Child of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and OHCHR, it was agreed to pursue a joint strategic regional agenda aiming at the adoption of legislation to prohibit all forms of violence against children; the development of a comprehensive, well-coordinated and well-resourced national strategy; and the consolidation of research and data systems in this area.

102. In the follow-up meeting held in Argentina in June 2010, it was agreed to organize three high-level subregional meetings in 2011 to promote cross-fertilization of experiences and scale up initiatives in those three areas.

5. Cairo Conference on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Islamic Jurisprudence, co-sponsored by the Organization of the Islamic Conference and UNICEF

103. In November 2009, the Special Representative participated in the conference organized under the patronage of the First Lady of Egypt to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood of Egypt.

104. The meeting was co-sponsored by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and UNICEF, and associated representatives of international organizations, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, national human rights institutions, NGOs and children from 10 OIC countries.

105. Through the Cairo Declaration on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Islamic Jurisprudence, adopted at the Conference, participants renewed their commitment to children's rights, calling for greater compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the provision of adequate human and financial resources for its implementation and the establishment of effective data systems on children.

106. Specifically on violence against children, participants expressed commitment to developing productive cooperation with the Special Representative and providing her with the necessary technical and financial support. They called on States members of OIC to take all appropriate legislative, social and other measures for effective follow-up to the study's recommendations; urgently reform legislation to ensure the prohibition of all forms of violence and the promotion of positive, non-violent forms of discipline; and, on the basis of positive national experiences, establish a high-level focal point to coordinate actions to prevent and combat violence, and develop a well-resourced national strategy on violence against children. Special attention was also given to prevention and protection from harmful

practices, protection of children under occupation and in times of war, and poverty alleviation.

107. The Cairo Declaration provides an important platform for States members of OIC and civil society organizations to strengthen the protection of children from violence and support the further implementation of the study's recommendations. With its specific call for the establishment of a children's forum, it opens up avenues for children's genuine contribution to this process, while helping to keep children duly informed of developments in this area.

6. Cooperation with the League of Arab States Sub-Committee on Violence against Children

108. The Special Representative participated in the high-level meeting of the League of Arab States, hosted in June 2010 by the Government of Lebanon. The meeting reviewed progress achieved by Arab nations in the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations study with a view to strengthening the process of follow-up at the national level.

109. The meeting was framed by the findings of the League of Arab States regional study on violence against children, which is the first region-wide initiative on the follow-up to the study. With its analysis of national developments and identification of areas where further action is required, the study provides a foundation to inform legal and policy reforms, and support violence prevention initiatives. The study will be presented at the next Ministerial Meeting of the League of Arab States, at which time a follow-up agenda is expected to be endorsed.

110. Law reform had been one of the areas identified by the regional study as requiring further progress; for that reason, a technical workshop was held on the same occasion on this topic, with the support of Save the Children and the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children. Similar expert discussions are being promoted in other regions in support of the adoption of a legal ban on all forms of violence.

7. Cooperation with the African Union and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

111. At the end of November 2009, the Special Representative held important meetings in Addis Ababa with the Commissioner for Social Affairs of the African Union and the Chairperson of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, with a view to promoting collaboration in the protection of children from all forms of violence. Violence against children has been high on the policy agenda of the African region, including in the context of the implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; during the drafting of the study and when the Day of the African Child 2006 was devoted to this topic; and during the 2007 Second Pan-African Forum on Children and in "The Call for Accelerated Action to Make Africa Fit for Children", adopted by the Forum. With the follow-up to the study, renewed opportunities exist to move this agenda forward.

112. The meetings held in Addis Ababa laid the ground for fruitful institutional collaboration, including for promoting initiatives to map out positive initiatives across the region and within States members of the African Union, supporting legislative reforms to prohibit all forms of violence, encouraging the development of

independent institutions on children's rights, and further consolidating national information and data systems on violence against children.

113. This collaborative framework was further strengthened during the thematic debate on violence against children, held in 2010 by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The meeting identified three key areas for follow-up, namely: advocacy on the protection of children from violence and the promotion of positive alternatives to violent discipline; support to legislative and policy reforms to prohibit all forms of violence; and development of an African report on this topic.

8. Cooperation with the Council of Europe

114. In the European region, significant developments have also taken place, with violence against children being given increasing attention in policymaking within the Council of Europe and the European Union. The Special Representative consolidated collaboration with those institutions and took part in strategic policy forums addressing elements of her mandate. The Special Representative participated in meetings which led to the adoption of the Council of Europe Strategy for 2009-2011: Building a Europe for and with Children, within which the protection of children from violence is a key priority concern. Under the Strategy, the Council acts as the regional initiator and coordinator of national and regional initiatives to combat violence against children, and as the European forum for follow-up to the recommendations of the United Nations study and cooperation with the Special Representative.

115. Important regional standards and initiatives provide a framework for the protection of children from violence. To support progress in this area, the Council of Europe established a Platform on Children's Rights with national focal points from countries across the region and a network of experts from key partner organizations. The Special Representative participates in this high-level policy forum, which plays a crucial role in the promotion of information-sharing, advocacy and debate, and in monitoring progress within the European region.

116. In November 2009, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted Policy Guidelines on Integrated National Strategies for the Protection of Children from Violence to guide national efforts for the development of a comprehensive national agenda for violence prevention and response. The Special Representative participated in the process leading to the adoption of the guidelines and continues to collaborate with the Council of Europe in advancing their dissemination and implementation. In May 2010, the Government of Austria hosted a follow-up meeting, in Vienna, to share experiences among national governments, international organizations, independent institutions and civil society partners, and advance progress in the development of national strategies and law reform, and in the consolidation of information on violence against children.

9. Cooperation with the European Union

117. Violence against children is high on the policy agenda of the European Union and was identified in a 2009 survey as a priority concern for young people within the 27 member States. The Special Representative participated in two high-level conferences held under the Swedish Presidency of the European Union and devoted to the protection of children from violence, namely, the European Union-NGO

Forum on Human Rights and the high-level meeting of the Permanent Intergovernmental Group "L'Europe de l'Enfance".

118. The meetings called for the establishment of a strong partnership with the Special Representative and support to her Office; reiterated commitment to the implementation of the United Nations study's recommendations, including legal reforms to prohibit all forms of violence; the promotion of research incorporating children's own experiences and perspectives; the development of independent children's rights institutions and the establishment of effective complaints mechanisms. The meeting also recommended the use of development assistance programmes and funding mechanisms to support those efforts.

119. The Special Representative also pursued discussions with the representatives of the European Union on the implementation of its 2007 Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child, which include a specific implementation strategy on violence against children framed by the study's recommendations.

120. With the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, which explicitly identifies children's rights as a key dimension of the European Union's agenda, the protection of children from violence is expected to gain increasing attention, opening up avenues for accelerated action in follow-up to the study.

10. Cooperation with policymakers, experts and researchers in support of an evidence-based agenda

121. One key overarching recommendation contained in the United Nations study concerns the need for national improvements in child data systems and for national research on violence against children. Violence against children is an area where available information is limited and difficult to gather, thus failing to capture the true scale and extent of this phenomenon in society. Overall monitoring systems are weak, while research remains scattered and of widely differing quality.

122. To promote progress in this area, the Special Representative participated, in November 2009, in the Global Conference on Research and Child Rights in Addis Ababa, organized by the Childwatch International Research Network, the African Child Policy Forum and the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, in cooperation with the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

123. The Conference brought together an eminent group of government representatives, policymakers, experts and researchers committed to the protection of children's rights through evidence-based analysis, advocacy and public policies.

124. Violence against children was high on the agenda of the Global Conference, with a particular emphasis on the role of data, analysis and research in support of the follow-up to the study. These dimensions were considered critical to inform the development of national comprehensive strategies and of legal reforms; to break the silence around sensitive questions; to enhance understanding of risk factors and vulnerabilities; and to strengthen violence prevention.

125. Cooperation with academics and research institutions will continue to be pursued to consolidate progress in areas covered by the study, and to address emerging concerns, including the serious risks of violence faced by children on the move, as well as the potential and challenges presented by the use of new technologies in the protection of children from all forms of violence.

VII. Looking ahead

126. The mandate of the Special Representative is anchored by the United Nations study on violence against children and its action-oriented recommendations, which provide a strategic agenda to secure children's protection from all forms of violence, in all settings and in all nations.

127. As noted in the present report, significant developments have marked the initial period of the Special Representative's mandate — these include strategic initiatives undertaken by United Nations agencies to mainstream violence against children within their agenda; critical strides by regional organizations and political groups, and civil society networks to institutionalize the process of implementation of the recommendations of the study; and noteworthy improvements at the national level to protect children from violence.

128. Strong partnerships within and beyond the United Nations system have helped to consolidate this agenda with dynamic mobilization and support from stakeholders at all levels, including governments, national institutions, civil society organizations and children themselves.

129. In spite of this promising trend, however, violence against children remains widespread, largely hidden and still too often condoned by society. Recognizing that no violence is justifiable and all violence can be effectively prevented, the Special Representative is strongly committed to maintaining momentum around violence prevention and responses; increasing visibility and renewed concern at the harmful effects of violence on children; addressing social norms to encourage a process of positive behaviour and social change; and mobilizing political support to combat this phenomenon and achieve steady progress.

130. Guided by this mission and building upon the strong human rights foundation of her mandate, the Special Representative will, in the immediate future, give primary attention to the following dimensions:

(a) Advancing her two-year campaign for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and promoting global adherence to other treaties aiming at children's protection from violence;

(b) Promoting progress in her three strategic areas of concern, namely, the development in each State of a comprehensive strategy on violence prevention and response; the adoption of an explicit national legal ban on all forms of violence against children, in all settings; and the consolidation of national data systems and research in this field;

(c) Supporting the development of a thematic report on safe, child-sensitive and accessible counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms on violence against children, in line with Human Rights Council resolution 13/20.

131. The Special Representative looks forward to collaborating closely with Member States and all other relevant stakeholders to advance this critical agenda and achieve children's freedom from violence in all its forms.